A SERMON AGAINST PERSECUTION,

Preached *March* 26. 1682.

Being the Fourth *Sunday* in *Lent*, (on *Gal.* IV. 29. Part of the *Epistle* for that Day) and the time when the Brief for the Persecuted Protestants in *France* was Read in the Parish-Church of *Shapwicke*.

AND

Now Published to the Consideration of Violent and Headstrong Men, as well as to put a stop to false Reports.

The Third Edition.

By *Sa. Bolde*, Vicar of *Shapwicke* in *Dorsetshire*.

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To the READER.

Reader,

IT *hath been my constant Course for some Months, to preach every* Sunday *either on the whole Epistle for the Day, or some part of it. And finding I was commanded in the Brief for the persecuted protestants in* France, *(which was brought me in the Week before the Fourth* Sunday *in* Lent) *to publish it the next* Sunday; *I found there was no need to alter my wonted course, in order to my pitching on a Subject which might suit with that Occasion. The famous Dr.* Patrick, *in his Epistle Dedicatory before his Sermon preached before the Lord Mayor, &c. the* 21 Sunday *after* Trinity, 1680. *ascribes his being directed to the Subject he then preached on, not so much to his* own Prudence, as a kind of Divine Providence; *because having observed this same Course that Year, he did not on that Occasion* go out of his way to meet with a fitting Argument. *Whether people will put the same Construction on this Discourse, or not, I neither know, nor care. But I think I may truly say, I have discoursed on this Text with* a Freedom *which becomes* a Christian, *and particularly* a true Son of the Church of *England.*

It may be some who pretend to the Church, will take exception at this Sermon; *for there are some* so shallow, *and of* so short Discourse, *they cannot understand how a Man can except against their violent Proceedings against some* Dissenters, *and yet be himself* a thorow Conformist. *Indeed it is not of any moment what such may either say or think; but yet to give them some satisfaction, if they ever happen to be favoured with any sober and lucid Intervals, I will, amongst the many Instances I might mention for this end, offer these few to their Consideration.*

1. *I could never yet understand that* Conformity *did oblige any man to lay aside* all Bowels of Compassion. *Nay, I am sure, to convince and satisfie men with* Reason, *and by Humility, Gentleness, and Meekness, is most Christian, and tends most to the Honour of particular persons, and whole Churches. How much of Fierceness and Violence there is in any Party, especially if countenanced by the Principles of that persuasion, so much there is of some Infernal and Devillish mixture in it.*

2. *Those who do generally decry and prosecute Dissenters with greatest passion and virulence, are greatest Strangers unto them. They usually know no more of them, than they learn from some* false and scandalous *Observator* or other.

3. *They are commonly ignorant of the* State *of the* Controversie *betwixt* us *and the* Dissenters. *The true Reason why* judicious and think-

ing

in Conformists *do use those particular Ceremonies which are enjoyned, is because they are satisfied they come under the general Rule given by the Apostle*, viz. *that* all things be done decently and in order. *And the Reason why they observe no other* Rites *and* Ceremonies, (*whilst it must be acknowledged there are others every whit as orderly and decent in themselves as these*) *is, because these alone are enjoyned by an* Authority, *they are persuaded, has Power to interpose in these things. And now if others do not break the general Rule given by the Apostle, but apprehend that a freedom from Impositions in these things, is one part of the* Liberty *they are commanded* to stand fast in, *why should we quarrel with, and prosecute them? especially whilst they acknowledge that it pertains to Authority to take notice of them who are Indecent, and Disorderly in their Worship. Is it not enough that we may act according to our own more* minute Persuasion, *and have the Countenance and Incouragement of those in Power, but we must ruine and oppress them who will not* truckle *to our* Fancies?

4. *I have had the Opportunity to be acquainted both with* Conformists *and* Nonconformists. *And as I acknowledge I have great cause to bless God for the* worthy Labours, *and* exemplary Lives *of very many in the* Church *of England, so I ought to give others their due. And thus I must say, that those of the* Dissenters *whom I have been acquainted with, have been men of great* Learning, *exemplary* Piety, *strict* Devotion, *and* extraordinary Loyalty; *Men who have been diligent Attenders on God in his publick Ordinances, eminently Religious in their Families, who have had a great regard to Conscience in all the parts of their Conversation with Men. They have neither been Haunters of Taverns, nor obscene and loose in their Discourse, nor have they been guilty of sitting Days and Nights at Cards and Dice. Indeed they have been Persons that could not be justly blamed for any thing, but that they had* straiter Notions *concerning* humane Impositions *in the* Service of God, *than we* Conformists *have.*

And a very learned Gentleman has upon Consideration given a very just and good Reason of this. He expresseth himself in these Words. I think this their Scrupulosity may be of God, and that some men are by him framed to it, that he hath provided it as a Bar and Obstacle in the Natures and Complexions of some devout Men, against any Innovations whatsoever, that dangerous ones may not steal upon the Church, for the better maintaining the Simplicity and Purity of Christian Religion and Worship.

Mr. Hunt's Appendix to his Argument for Bps. Right in judging in Capital Causes in Parliam. pag. 84.

If after all this, any remain unsatisfied, they may seek Satisfaction where they please, for

Sa. Bolde.

A

A SERMON Against PERSECUTION, &c.

Galatians 4. Verse 29.

But as then He that was born after the Flesh persecuted Him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

THere were some even in the Apostles days, who laboured what they could to hinder the progress of the Gospel, by Preaching up the necessity of the Jewish Law. These having insinuated themselves into the Churches of *Galatia*, had infected many of those Christians with their poysonous and false Doctrines: For though they did not openly declare themselves Enemies to the Gospel, yet they did supplant it as to its power and efficacy, by alledging its insufficiency alone, and the necessity of their being Circumcised, and embracing those old Rules God had anciently inforced under the former dispensation. They knew if they could leaven and corrupt them with these Principles, they did at first so speciously display, it would not be long before they should

should entirely undermine that Foundation the Apostles had laid amongst them. For however innocent their Pretences might seem at first, it is clear St. *Paul* perceived the consequence would be dangerous. *Christ will not profit you at all*, Gal. 5. 2.

For this cause it is he doth labour with them so earnestly, and useth such variety of Arguments to secure them from giving place any further to these false and pernicious Teachers, and to convince them of their Error and Fault, in giving way unto them at all.

Amongst other Arguments, he urgeth the different state men are in when under the Gospel, from that they were in when under the Law: And that the Law was primarily designed only to prepare and fit Men for the Gospel, but not to continue in the same Place and Power after, as before; no more than he that being arrived to ripe and full years, is bound to continue under their Tutorage who had the care of him in his Minority, *Gal.* 4. 1.

He afterwards proceeds to argue with them from the Nature of that Law they are so desirous to be under, *ver.* 21. And then explains himself by a Similitude of *Abraham*'s two Sons; shewing there is as great a difference between those who are under a Gospel State, and them that are under the Law, as between that Son which was his Natural Child, and that which was conferred on him by the special Promise and powerful Interposition of God's particular Blessing.

And thus he takes occasion to reflect on the great Alteration that was wrought amongst them, since they did listen to, and entertain these false and deceiving Apostles; and does, as it were, tell them, it was no wonder they should thus vary, and that they should now approve ways of Severity towards Christ's Apostles and Followers, seeing they did receive and adhere to them that were directly contrary to Christs Ministers and Servants. Compare *Gal.* 4. 14, 15. with this 29. *v.* It is no more than what hath fallen out in all Ages of the World. The Servants of Satan, and Enemies of true Godliness, have always been for Persecuting the faithful and obedient Children of God. And it seems by this Epistle, to be the especial and peculiar Character of them that are irreligiously and immoderately hot and zealous about Ceremonies, to be the greatest Persecutors of those who are most

Pious

Flesh and Conscience. Look through all the Scriptures, nay, look through all the Ages of the Church, you shall generally find that those who were most for the Persecution of others on the account of some Indifferences relating to Religion, were very wicked Superstitious men; men that were inordinately Zealous for, and fond of some outward Ceremonies. Now if a fondness for any Ceremonies would maintain and justifie Mens persecution of others who cannot approve their Fopperies, one would think these Teachers, who were crept in amongst the *Galatians* should be excused, because they prest only those things that had formerly been of Divine appointment: For, *He that came to take away the insupportable Yoke of Jewish Ceremonies, certainly did never intend to gall the Necks of his Disciples with another in stead of it.* But here we see how dangerous it is to give our selves too great a Liberty in admiring any bare external and accidental Appendage to Religion. Satan doth suddenly strike in on such Occasions, and doth so powerfully affect mens minds with some strange Apprehensions of the Beauty, Excellency, Usefulness, and Necessity of these things, they are quite taken off from minding the inward Part and Soul of Religion. And by this means they come to lay out all their Zeal about these trifling and worthless Parts, they even starve their own Souls, by a constant feasting on these meer Husks, and do what they can to destroy others Souls, at least their Bodies, by persecuting them, if they will not conceive and believe as well of these things, as they do. It is a very shrewd Sign and token that a Man is a wicked unregenerate Man, if he be of a fierce and persecuting Temper; if he be prone to endeavour to Ruine and Trouble, or further the Vexation and Disturbance of serious Pious People, only because they cannot be as Ceremonious as he is.

Dr. Stillingf. Pref. to Irenic.

He that was born after the Flesh, &c.] The Words do immediately relate to the Sons of *Abraham*: *Ismael* is *He that was born after the Flesh*, viz. in a meer natural ordinary way. Now, as he did Persecute, and Mock, and Deride, and Insult over *Isaac*, who *was born after the Spirit*, viz. who was the Son of the Promise, and in order to whose Birth there was the Exerting a Divine Power in the accomplishing of that Promise which was made to *Abraham*, when both he and *Sarah* were past Hopes, and naturally uncapable:

ble of having Children, *so it is now, viz.* Even so those in these Days, who are of the Seed of *Abraham*, that pretend they have him for their Father, and are outwardly Jews, or that pretend themselves so out of servile Compliance, do persecute them that *are born after the Spirit*; that is, those who are the Children of the Promise, the Seed of *Abraham*, truly so called in a Religious Sense, who succeed him in his Faith.

The *Jews* did very much boast of, and lay an extraordinary stress on their being the Seed of *Abraham*; they placed most of their Religion on this, and thought it a sufficient Plea for themselves on all Occasions, and an effectual Security from those Judgments that were sometimes threatned against them; and therefore we find the Holy Men in Scripture often labouring to Convince them what a Sandy Foundation they did build upon, *Matth.* 3. 9. *John* 8. 39. *Rom.* 4. 12, 13, 14. It is indeed a great Mercy to be Born of Pious and Religious Parents; Those Parents that have a great Familiarity and Interest with God, have usually a great Treasury and Portion of Blessings laid up with God for their Posterity, *Exod.* 20. 6. But People may lay too great a stress on this outward Priviledge; and if Children do not labour to walk in the Steps of Religious and Gracious Parents, but depend wholly on their Predecessors Holiness, they will be fearfully mistaken at last.

He that was born after the Flesh, &c.

He that is a loose, wicked, Unregenerate, Carnal Person, is for Persecuting and Undoing him that is born after the Spirit, him that is Serious, Holy, Strict, and Conscientious; thus it has been, and thus it is. I will sum up all into this Proposition.

Doct. Wicked, Unregenerate Men, always have been, and still are for Persecuting Holy, Religious, Spiritual Men. Look through all the Books both of Old and New Testament; nay, look through all History, and you will still find, where ever you meet with Persecution, that it was carried on by the *Devil's Agents*, by Wicked Lewd Men, against Holy and Righteous Men. Observe the Characters every where of Informers and Persecutors, and see if they have not been branded with some notorious and hateful Wickedness.

Indeed

Indeed Men can scarce arrive to such a height of Wickedness as this is, till they have by the habitual Exercise of other Crimes seared their Consciences, and are become so insensible, that all the commendable Notions and Sentiments that do usually accompany Mankind, are lost and eradicated out of their Breasts.

Consider these few Instances of Persecutors as they now occur, and then see whether all others be not of the same Complexion. What an obdurate Caitiff and Villain was *Cain*, that slew his own Brother, because more Holy, and consequently better accepted with God than he was? What a vile Character is *Isaiah* all along represented under to us? Were not they Drunkards that were against *David*, and made Songs of him? What were the false Prophets that set themselves against *Micaiah*? were they not such as did Prophesie Lies? Who were those that were for the Burning the three Children? And for the casting of *Daniel* into the Lions Den? Were they not all Flattering and Abominable Idolaters? What was *Judas* that Betrayed Christ, that Informed the High Priest and Scribes against his Master the Son of God? Was he not a Covetous Mercenary Son of Perdition? What were those that swore, and gave Evidence against Christ? were they not a couple of Perjured Miscreants? And if you search and inquire, you will find all Informers against, and Persecutors of the Just and Holy, to be of the same Stamp. Are not the Informers and Persecutors of our Days like to those that were before them? Is it not evident to all, that they are notorious for Perjury, Falsness, Drunkenness, Whoredom, Prophane and common Swearing? Are there any more regardless of the Lord's Day, more Irreligious and Obscene in their Discourse, more Vile, Contemptible and base in the Eye and Opinion of every Honest, Pious, Good, or Sober Person? Are there any so unjust, so False, so exorbitantly Vicious, Lewd, and Debauch'd as they?

Now Christ and Religion do not allow of Persecutions, of Troubling and Vexing, of Ruining and Undoing any Man, for little Indifferences, much less for Truth and Holiness. They are for Advancing and Propagating Holiness, and Peace, and Love, and Condescention, *Is.* 42. 2, 3. Christ came not to destroy but to save Mens Lives; and sharply rebukes his Disciples when they

they would have called for Fire from Heaven to destroy the *Samaritans*: It is a sure token Men are Enemies to Christ and Religion, when they are of a persecuting Spirit. It hath always been the great Character and Glory of the Christian Religion, that were ever it came, it did promote and further Quietness, and Peace, and Love, and Brotherly Kindness; and did banish Wrath, and Fury, and Malice, and every hateful and hurtful Disposition and Inclination. It was always thus, till Popery got some power in the World, and then more barbarous Villanies and outragious Cruelties were perpetrated under this Name, than were known to the World before. And if it be carefully observed, you shall find, that in all Ages, those who have been most for cruel Methods against them that differ from them, have had most of the Spirit of Popery in them; and it is deplorably apparent, that now in our days, they who appear most vigorous and active in Prosecuting those Protestants who differ from others in some accidental Matters, have a great affection for Popery, and are hastening towards *Rome* as fast as they can.

That the following part of my Discourse may be as plain and easie to you as possible, I will reduce what I design to say on this Subject to these following Heads. 1. I will tell you what persecution is. 2. Name more particularly the Characters of them that are Persecutors. 3. Shew you whence it is that Wicked Men are so violently set against the Godly. 4. I will make some brief Application of the whole.

First. I am first of all to tell you what Persecution is. And it is an endeavouring to Trouble, Molest, Disturb, Kill or any way Hurt and Injure another Person on some Religious account. Every Prosecution of a Person, is not properly Persecution, but only when it is grounded on some Religious Affair. A Man may be guilty of Sin in prosecuting another upon Civil account, but this Sin comes under another Denomination, as Oppression, Injustice, unpeaceable Brangling, *&c.* Now Persecution is much-what the same in Religion, that Oppression is in Civils. When Men will not suffer others to enjoy that Liberty, and those Rights in Religion, which either Nature or Revelation do allow them; but will be severe against them, if in every accidental Matter they will not be just of their mind: When Men do hale others to Tribunals;

nals, and procure them either to be Punished in their Bodies, or in their Estates; or to be deprived of their Lives, or civil Liberties, because they either perform some Duty God has expresly Commanded in a way they do not approve, or because they will not Consent to, Embrace, and Comply with those Determinations they have just reason to Believe are Sinful. Whilst Men are not openly Wicked, but tho not free from common Infirmities, which do unavoidably accompany humane Nature in this frail Estate, yet free from Gross and Scandalous sins; whilst they deny not any Doctrine of Christianity, nor divulge any Tenet to the Prejudice of Christianity, nor do any way endeavour to disturb the Peace of the Government under which they live; they have a right to a peaceable and quiet Residence, and ought to be free from any Molestation, tho they cannot in every accidental thing attain to the same Latitude with others. Whoever goes about to Disturb and Injure, or Contract on such as these, Fines, or other Punishments, because they cannot receive and comply with those supernumerary Conceits some do too much please themselves with, and press with too much warmth on others, are too lyable to this heavy Charge of Persecution. And if we only consider what it is they are so concerned for, we may see too much reason to conclude, they have no great Portion of Commendable Properties. Wherefore I will now proceed to the

Second Point, which is to account to you some of their Characters more particularly, or to shew you what kind of People Persecutors generally are. They are commonly observ'd to be the worst, and most Brutish, and Degenerate part of Mankind. Consult others, Read Histories, or consider what you may Learn from your own Observation; you will find them to come generally under some very Scandalous, and Offensive Characters. They are usually taken to be the very Pest of Society. It is almost as dangerous to live amongst them, as amongst the Wild and Savage Beasts of the Desart. They are a sort of Tygers and Lions, the most Ravenous Beasts of Prey, with humane Visages. Were the *Pythagorean* Notion of the Transmigration of Souls received, the whole World would then conclude them nothing but humane Carcases acted with Wolvish Breath. More particularly they have some or all of these Characters and Qualities attending them.

Secondly!

1. They

First. 1. They are Men of a very Superstitious, Blind, and Ignorant Zeal. And there is no one thing that makes Men more formidable and Troublesom, than undue and mistaken Zeal. It is like Fire when it meets with Gunpowder and other combustible Matter; It devours all before it, and its Flames become unquenchable. Superstitious Bigots place Religion in things that are at best but bare humane Inventions, many times pure Diabolical Suggestions; and then Satan to ingulf them further, doth so excite and irritate them, they contend and strive for these things, as if Heaven, Soul, and Eternity were all at Stake. Hence it is they represent all that are not of their Way and Mind, as the greatest Criminals and Malefactors. No sooner do Men place Religion where God placeth none, but Satan obtains a great Power and Influence over them, and at last hurries them headlong into strange and wild Extravagances in the Defence and for the Propagation of those Points. These are usually the most fierce and barbarous of all other People. For it is usualy observed, that Superstitious Men are very fearful, and that the greatest Cowards are most Revengeful and Cruel, if they obtain an Advantage. *Paul*'s blind Zeal made him a Persecutor: *He did it Ignorantly.* And our Saviour tells us of some that would kill and murder Men, and flatter themselves with a Perswasion that they were therein *doing God and Religion good Service.*

John 16. 2.

Secondly. 2. They are Men of insufferable Pride and Malice; there is an absolute Necessity that some degree of that Popish Conceit of Infallibility should prevail in all that are Persecutors, to reconcile themselves to their own Practices: For who can be so absurd and foolish, as to endeavour to ruine others, because they will not Believe or Practise what they themselves do acknowledg they are not so certain concerning, but that it is possible they may be in an Errour and Mistake? Those who are Persecutors do expect all should yield to them, and take them for Oracles; and if they be not thus received, they think the Affront is too great to be endured, and therefore must be Revenged. Malice and Revenge hath generally a very great Influence on all Persecutions. Your Persecutors are usually People of a Haughty, Curst, and Poisonous Nature, they love to be *doing Evil*: Their Delight is to Hurt and Offend them, with whom *God is pleased.* They are canker'd

canker'd and ill natured, and never pleased but when they have an opportunity to intrap, and make the *Innocent fall*. They cannot bear Contradiction. *Zedekiah* was so impatient of Contradiction, he no sooner hears *Micaiah* bring a different Message from his, and discover how a lying Spirit was in the Mouths of the other Prophets, but he falls upon *Micaiah*, and Buffets him. 1 *King.* 22. 24.

3. They are Men of desperate and broken Fortunes, or else great Worshippers of *Mammon*. They do commonly take up Informing, and Swearing, and Persecuting as a Trade to live by. They scarce know how to subsist but by Preying on the Wealth, and Estates, and Goods of those honest, sober, religious People they do Inform and Swear against. Men that are so lazy, they cannot Work; so luxurious, they have not wherewithal to maintain their Lusts; and of so ill and blasted a Fame and Reputation, none dares trust them. These are indeed a fit sort of People to Persecute the Righteous: They cannot Live unless some or other fall by their means. There are two sorts of most abominable and wicked Ways, Men have found out to maintain themselves, and feed their Lusts by: The one is Robbing on the High-way, and the other is Informing against, and Persecuting the Righteous. Now those that apply to the latter Way, are the most Infamous of the two; for as they are wicked enough, to commit as great Villanies as the other dares, so they have not Courage to adventure on such dangerous Courses, and to expose themselves to so much Hazzard for a Livelihood as the other do. They think it easier to Swear, than Hector and afright Men out of what they have. The wise Man seems to give a very lively Description of these People in *Prov.* 4. 16, 17. *They sleep not except they have done Mischief, and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall; for they eat the Bread of Wickedness, and drink the Wine of Violence.* *Thirdly.*

If there be any Persecutors whose Fortunes are not altogether so despicable and small, they are such as make *Mammon* their God; The Hopes of getting Wealth doth very powerfully irritate them to what they do. Was it not thirty pieces of Silver that made *Judas* betray his Master? What is the Reason Sinners do excite one another to *wait for Blood, and to lurk privily*

Prov. 1. *[illegible]*
13. *[illegible]*
[illegible]

Eccles. 2. They are [illegible] Men [illegible] Such as are [illegible] profaned Ecclesiastics [illegible] Men that have [illegible] Lust and Wan-tonness, that are [illegible] in the world Natural, being [illegible] in their Ex-tremes [illegible] with [illegible] their God, and [illegible] ing nothing [illegible] this World. Your ordinary Ser-vants [illegible] People that do most com-monly [illegible] to Swear against them that *[illegible]* to tear the Name of God in pieces, [illegible] every turn, by ta-king his Name in Vain, [illegible] every word they speak with some dreadful Oaths [illegible] these impudently swear a hun-dred Oaths [illegible] provocation, these are the fittest Men [illegible] against, and indeavour their Ro-ine, [illegible] conscientious regard to the Name of God [illegible] hath [illegible] his Im-age. [illegible] these [illegible] solemnly [illegible] and prohibitate [illegible] by swearing even falsely against others [illegible] the Temptation and Incouragement of getting Wealth and [illegible] since they are so accustomed to af-firm [illegible] think they never speak gentlefly, unless they [illegible] at utmost Defiance, and so in Words [illegible] Challenge [illegible] to Damn them. He that sets himself a-part [illegible] Service by indulging to all the Lusts of the Flesh, that [illegible] of his Drunkenness and Uncleanness, of his fre-quent [illegible] Days Death, this can unconcerned-ly [illegible] with Wantonness, speak of his Hopes and Desires of being [illegible] for ever, that defiles the Air he speaks in, and of-fends all he comes amongst, with his prodigious Oaths and Exe-crations? *[illegible]* Man is ready prepared, if an Occasion do offer it self, or [illegible] by any means be obtained to swear a Conscientious,

Religious

[illegible] Man out of his Right, and himself into it. That [illegible] and ordinarily endanger his Soul, and Swear for nothing, [illegible] much more do for, be it right or wrong, when he hath the [illegible] of Wealth, and so may be the Applause and Com- [illegible] of great Men for his Incomparable [illegible]

[illegible] given [illegible] of these last Particulars. I shall *Thirdly*, [illegible] Men are such bitter and [illegible] Inveterate Enemies [illegible] Godly. Constant Experience is an undeniable Proof [illegible] for so age hath passed, [illegible] the world Men [illegible] to do [illegible] the Righteous [illegible] every [illegible] to confirm what [illegible] Certainty of it [illegible] take notice of this [illegible] which amongst our selves. But from [illegible] which might be mentioned, as having [illegible] and consuming to this. I will only name the [illegible]

1. There is a desperate and [illegible] Godliness, and so against good Men, rooted [illegible] Nature of wicked Men. Ever since we lost the Image of God, we are by Nature *the Children of Wrath*, not only [illegible] are subject and lyable to the Wrath and Displeasure of God, but [illegible] are of a wrathful [illegible] and unreconcilable [illegible] are naturally Enemies not only to God, but to one another, [illegible] allow, and it is to [illegible] principally, rather wholly, [illegible] Conduct and Providence of God, that all Men are not [illegible] up in Arms, and always endeavouring the utter Extirpation out of another. But this Enmity is especially [illegible] against all goodness. When [illegible] *Heb. 6. 5, 6.* man has [illegible] he becomes [illegible] good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, [illegible] Apostatize, he becomes the most Violent and implacable Enemy to it. So it is with Man naturally since the Fall. The Devils, [illegible] such pure and [illegible] Angels, are now the greatest Enemies of Holiness.

2. Wicked Men are of a Curst, Envious, Malicious Temper, they are of a Persecuting Nature, and have a great deal of Sourness in their Temper; they are against Holiness, as being contrary to their Nature, and thus become so violent against good Men.

Look

Look at any Creature, you will find it hath an aversion to those things which are of a contrary Nature, and if there be any thing of Wildness, and Cruelty, and Savageness intermixed, then it is extraordinary violent against those which are of the contrary Nature. But those things which have not such a Savageness intermixt, they only testify their aversion by a peaceable withdrawing themselves, not at all endeavouring the Destruction or Hurt of the other. This is very apparent in the Wolf and the Lamb: They delight not in the Society one of another, but the Lamb, though of so contrary a Nature to the Wolf, doth not seek the Life or hurt of the Wolf; but the Wolf is not satisfied but with the total Destruction of the Lamb. Nor is this only because the Wolf doth usually prey and feed on such Creatures; for then, when the Hunger were satisfied, that rapacious and fierce Temper would cease. That Creature which is of a fierce and ravenous Nature, will destroy and kill not only out of Necessity, but also for Sport and Recreation. Thus Wicked Men they are of a contrary Nature to the Godly, and have much wildness and ravenousness intermixed: *They cannot sleep unless they make some to fall*; and therefore they are resembled to, and set forth by those Creatures which are wholly set upon destroying the Harmless and Innocent. *They lye lurking privily in their Den, that they may catch the Righteous.*

If you ask what the Reason is that the Righteous and Holy do not Persecute the Wicked, as well as the Wicked do them, the Nature of each being equally contrary to each other? I answer, The Roughness and Severity of good Mens Natures is taken away by that sanctifying and altering Grace which is bestowed on them, and for which they are so much hated by the other. The new Nature conferred on them, hath the harmlesness of the Dove accompanying it. A sanctified Nature, so far as under the Power and influence of Sanctification, hath no Hatred, nor Envy, nor Malice, nor any other Quality that is hurtful. It dares not hate or hurt an Enemy.

And the true reason why ungodly Men do no more hurt to the Righteous, is because God restrains them; he puts *his Hook into their Nose, and his Bridle into their Lips*, and checks them.

Contrariety causeth their Aversion to the Godly, but it is that

that Fierceness which is intermixed, which causeth the Violence of the Persecution: as you see Tygers, Wolves, Lions, and Bears, do pursue, and kill, and devour Sheep, Lambs, and other innocent and profitable Creatures; and as Hawks and Kites do fly after and prey on Turtle Doves and Pidgeons: so do wicked, outragious, ungodly Men persecute and trouble the Just and Holy.

2. Their Natural Enmity is very much increased and excited into act by very unjust Prejudices, which they imbibe and entertain with delight. A wicked persecuting Person rejoyceth to hear of any thing which tends to the Defamation and Disrepute of one that is truly Religious: He labours to spread and divulge it abroad, and aggravates every mistake, and almost unavoidable Infirmity, representing it as an hideous and unpardonable Crime: Nay, he usually attributes the Faults of some particular Persons to the whole Profession. Thus the very Name of a Pious Man is odious and insupportable to him; and he talks as virulently against, and desires as vehemently the utter Destruction of every one, how harmless, good, and Innocent soever, who comes under such a Denomination, as against the vilest Miscreant and Criminal in the World, tho he never knew or heard of any Hurt by the one, or any good by the other. 2.

It may not be amiss to take notice now of a Sin that prevails exceedingly at this time amongst our selves; which is, that we have disputed our selves into so much Wrath, such an Aversness and Enmity to one another, that Dissenters, and those who pretend to the Church, can scarce endure the Names of one another, unless some disgraceful and reproachful Term be annexed. Too many of them are become such fierce Adversaries one against another, that they have not only abandoned themselves from the eminent Exercise of that Charity and mutual Forbearance common Christianity doth very much enforce, but they do with too much Appetite listen and inquire after, and in stead of mourning for, do rejoyce and almost triumph in the Faults which particular Persons on either side are chargeable with; and which is yet a greater Fault, they are too frequent in applying the Guilt beyond its due extent.

By this means do those who are Corrupt, Carnal, and Sen-

 sual.

ful on each side, labour to increase our Animosities, and make our Divisions wider and more unhealable.

But it is most of all deplorable, that the Malignity and Poison of this Course seems to diffuse and spread it self amongst them who have given undeniable and prodigious Evidences of extraordinary Learning, and sometimes of very great and deservedly imitable Moderation and Equanimity: Which discovers, that when People do apply themselves to advance any Party with undue warmth, they forget to observe that Decorum they have formerly commended to the World, and are too easily induced to use the meanest Arts in depressing the Cause they oppose.

It is certainly very unbecoming and unworthy of Men of great Learning, Holiness, and Gravity, to endeavour to defame all that are of the contrary Persuasion, by suggesting to the World evil Surmises and Opinions concerning all in general, by reporting infamous Stories which concern only some few in particular: for, besides the injury they themselves do by this means to those that are innocent, they both countenance the unjust Methods the worst of Men do use in decrying those they are against, and they furnish them with Materials to carry on their Design.

This hath been an ancient Method People have used to revenge themselves on the Innocent. *Report, say they, and we will report.* Do but either start any one Story that is real, with relation to some Particulars; or frame and coin a Story that wil appear plausible, and let it once take Air, and we will soon help to transmit it further: and by this means *we shall take our Revenge on them.*

Jer. 20. 10.

But what a dreadful Blow would be given to Christianity in the Opinion of its professed Enemies, should all Parties labour to rake together the foul and enormous Offences of Particular Persons amongst those they do oppose, and then publish them to the World, as what the whole Party doth either approve, or may justly be charged with?

There is no doubt but this Church (tho its Government and Constitution be so pure, justifiable, and consonant to Apostolical Practice) would suffer very much, should but the almost Ordinary Miscarriages of a great Number who pretend to the Clergy be exposed to Publick View, with an Account of the Encourage-

ment

ment they meet with, or at least how free they are from Threats and Molestations; whilst others who live better Lives, and are more constant and diligent Preachers, and do express on all Occasions more of that Charity and Forbearance towards all Men, which Christianity doth so much commend and enforce, are frowned upon, and left open to the Rage and Fury of besotted, frantick, and debauch'd Bigots. There is no defence against unjust Prejudice.

3. They apprehend, that the strict and holy Lives of Religious Men do very much reproach their lewd and vicious Courses. At least, they find, that their pure and holy Doctrines do occasion them anguish and unquietness, disturbance and trouble, in the perpetrating of their beloved Wickednesses. Why could not *Herodias* suffer *John Baptist* to keep his Head any longer? It was because she could not live quietly in her uncleanness with her Husbands Brother, while he was still preaching to *Herod*, That *it was not lawful for him to have her*. Indeed there is not any thing doth more effectually discover the horrid Loathsomeness of wicked Mens Lusts and Practices, than the chaste, holy, and strict Conversations of Pious Men: And therefore they are so much against them, even because their Doctrines and Lives do so much reprove their wicked Works of Darkness. *Thirdly.* *Mat. 14. 3.*

4. Holy Men are carrying on a different work from that which ungodly lewd Men are designing and aiming. They are Servants to different Masters, and therefore it is not to be expected they should accord very well. The good Mans Work doth defeat and ruin the Sinners, and therefore he is against him, and doth persecute him all he can, because he belongs not to his Company, but is labouring to destroy his Masters Kingdom, and overthrow what he esteems his greatest interest. *If ye were of the World, the World would love his own; but because ye are not of the World, but I have chosen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you.* *Fourthly.* *John 15. 19.*

5. This proceeds many times from a very strong and powerful Impulse of Satan. As wicked Men are his Slaves, and doing his Work, so he doth irritate and excite them in a special manner to this very Instance of Persecuting the Godly. The Devil thinks he has most Work done, when the greatest number of Righteous Men fall; and he concludes, That if he could by his Instruments *Fifthly.*

 absolutely

absolutely suppress the Righteous, he should Reign and Triumph in the World without any Opposition. The Devil *rules in the hearts of the Children of disobedience.* And it is worth our Observation, That immediately before *Judas* went to the High-Priest, *&c.* to inform against and betray his Master, it is said, *The Devil entred into him.* So that one main Instance whence it is that Wicked People do persecute the Righteous, is, *because the Devil is in them.* The Devil doth as truly possess, act, and govern them that Persecute the Righteous, as he did those that were called Demoniacks, when our Saviour was upon Earth. And tho he do not cause them now to tear, and rend, and torture themselves, as they did then; yet he has a more dreadful Influence on their Souls, and endangers them much more as to their spiritual and final Estate.

Eph. 2. 2.

Luke 22. 3, 4.

Fourthly. I am now in the last place to apply what has been discoursed concerning Persecution; and will do it in a few Words.

1. For the Support and Encouragement of the Righteous, when persecuted and in distress. Take care that the Reproaches and Violences of the Ungodly do not affright you from your Uprightness, nor shake your Stedfastness. Those storms and ruffling Winds, their Threats and Menaces, should not break or overthrow you, but should rather have the same Influence on you, that Blasts and Tempests have on firm and thriving Trees, whilst they break and overturn those that are rotten and weak, they do only cause the other to take deeper and faster Root.

This is no more than what you must expect, and what every good man ought daily to prepare for. He that is resolved for *Heaven*, must *go through many tribulations*; you are warned of such Treatment before-hand. Our Saviour has dealt so plainly with all his followers in this particular, that it is one great part of a Christians Work to live alway in expectation of those things, that so he may not be surprized when they come. We have our every days Cross to wait for, and must be willing to take it up, and bear it away with chearfulness, whenever it comes. We have not the clearest and most unquestionable Evidences of the Truth, at least the Power of Christianity in and over us, till we can chearfully part with and resign up all, yea with triumph bear away Reproaches, and Fears, and false Accusations, till we can lay

down

down our very Lives rejoycingly for Christ, his Gospel, and Religion, if occasion be.

And if God sees fit to bring you to the Trial, it is that you may have the stronger assurance of your unfeigned Love to him, and unconquerable Interest in him; and that you may display the Efficacy and Beauty of Religion unto the World in the most undeniable and constraining Instances. The Persecutions of the first Christians gained Christianity a great Repute, and made such an entrance for it into the World, as could never be stopt up or hindred, till Sloth, Carnality, and Superstitious Conceits had corrupted the Minds and Lives of its Professors; and this hapned after they were burthened and over-loaded with Honours, Ease, Preferments, and a Multitude of unnecessary and superfluous outward Accomodations.

The Saints and People of God have met with the same Treatment in all Ages: This has been their Lot and Portion, when they have lived among wicked loose People; and we generally find that they took great satisfaction in it. Our Blessed Saviour was used thus himself: How was he reviled, scorned, reproach'd, falsely accused, spit upon, bufferted, whipp'd, and at last disgracefully crucified, by a degenerate inhumane People? You see the greatest and most absolute Innocence is not safe from the malicious Rage and Violence of ungodly Men. The Apostles presently after were served in the same manner; and when they were scourged, to render them a publick Scorn and Reproach, they went away rejoycing that they were counted worthy to be thus used for Christ. It is one part of the Vocation you are called to, to suffer for Christ, *Phil.* 1. 29. The more that wicked Men do load you with contumelious Language, and oppressive Fines and Mulcts, or do inflict on you Corporal Punishments and Torments, the more they do to raise you to the Likeness of the Blessed Jesus.

And indeed it is not the least matter of rejoycing, that they who persecute you are only such as *are born after the Flesh.* Your Enemies are they that are Enemies to God and Christ, worldly, sensual, devilish Men, *who glory in their shame, who make their Belly their God, who are Enemies to the Cross of Christ, and whose end is destruction.* It is a much greater disgrace to be respected and spoken

spoken well of, by such as these, than to have them always spitting out of their Venom, and darting forth their forked Tongues and Stings against you: They will speak well of none but such as are infected with their Disease. They that are the spawn of Satan, will undoubtedly have ill will to the Children of God.

But what a rejoycing is it, that by this very means you are so particularly assured of a most glorious recompence: Besides the inexpressible Consolation God will secretly Communicate at present, he has provided, and in a special manner promised, incomprehensible Felicities hereafter; *Mat.* 5. 10, 11, 12. 1 *Pet.* 4. 14.

But then you must be sure that what you suffer for be the Cause of Christ. Let it be true and real Religion, Conscience indeed, and not any groundless Phancy, unreasonable Humour, or unaccountable Resolution and Stubbornes you suffer for. Especially beware *that none of you suffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil doer, or as a busie Body in other mens Matters.* These are the Faults and Characters of Persecutors themselves, and for these things men ought to suffer. See that your Consciences be clear and well informed. Take care to understand the thing you contend for. Weigh your Opinions and your Practices in *the Balance of the Sanctuary.* Be sure your Cause be good, and then if you are Persecuted and do suffer, come under what Denomination you will, and let your persecutors be who they will, of how great Power and Authority soever, I dare and will pray that *Peace may be upon you, and upon the whole Israel of God.* It is the Cause that makes the Martyr, tho it is not alway the Cause that makes the Persecutor.

1 *Pet.* 4. 15.

2*ly.* Let this caution you, that you be not guilty of this Sin. It will be found at last a very dreadful thing to be a Persecutor; for by this means you become fighters against God. And dare ye resolutely *provoke the Lord to jealousie? are ye stronger than he?* Did ever any set themselves *against God and prosper?* The Lord Jesus doth take what is done to his Followers and Disciples, as done to himself. And he will terribly avenge himself of the Adversaries and destroyers of his People. You cannot hurt the People of God, but you offend and pierce God himself *in the Apple of his Eye. And will not God (think you) avenge his own Elect, which cry day and night unto him? I tell you he will avenge them speedily.*

1 *Cor.* 10. 22.

Zech. 2. 8.

Luk. 18. 7, 8.

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It were better for you, you had never been born, or that some fatal and miserable stroke had ended your Lives as soon as you saw the Light, than that you should live to be Persecutors, *Mat.* 18, 6. Have not Persecutors alway come to some fearful end?

If you would not pull down Divine Vengeance on your own Heads, if you would not make your selves and your Posterity infamous to all Generations, by inheriting the most dreadful Curses on your Bodies, your Estates, and all your Interests and Concerns, if you would not be the general abhorrence of mankind, if you would not rot away piece-meal whilst you are alive, if you would not be your own unpitied Executioners, if you would not be filled with Horror and Consternation by reason of a Wounding, Terrifying, and accusing Conscience, if you would not purchase to your selves the hottest Climate and Region in the infernal Pit, but can be content with *an ordinary Damnation*, if you have no desire to be the Worst, the most miserable, the most Contemptible, of all that shall inherit everlasting Burnings, take heed of this Sin. The Devil never feasts so deliciously, as when served with Persecutors and Informers.

How variously and strangely has God testified his Displeasure and wrath against Persecutors? Whole Volumns might be filled with bare Relations. Those Judgments have been inflicted on them, to make them a scorn, and abhorrence, and a warning to posterity, which were never known, or heard of in the World, till they were punish't and made infamous by them.

And if you be Persecutors, God has the same and greater Plagues and Judgments in store for you.

I know there are few who apply themselves to this Course, but they flatter themselves, and endeavour to satisfie others with some or other false and pretended Excuses. But alas! what will these avail you, whilst they are so Thin and Hollow, not only the All-seeing-God, but the ordinary sort of people can see through them? Unless the cause be too black and horrid to obtain the Patronage of Hell, or the Actors be sordid and scandalous enough to make the Devil ashamed of them, he will furnish with some pretence to palliate and gloss the Fact.

But it is not enough that you have something to plead and say in your own defence amongst men, unless it be what will be warranted

warranted and approved by the Judge of all, for if you could so varnish the severity you use to others, as to obtain the favourable opinion of the generality of men concerning it, what will this avail you, if when you appear before the great Tribunal, you be found amongst Persecutors? All false Colours, and meretricious paint will then disappear.

Now to secure you from this danger, it will be needful to have a constant regard to these two Rules.

1. Have nothing to do with hurting, or contracting damages on any serious, upright, Conscientious Christian. Be not accessary for a World to the Ruine, or needless prejudice of any one, who stands fast in the faith of Christ. Those who agree with us in all the Substantials of Religion, and add no dangerous or destructive Tenet to these, who are Holy, Sober, Chaste, Temperate, Righteous, Compassionate and Merciful, and who no way endeavour to disturb the publick Peace, but are Vigorous Protestants, and Resolute opposers of the common Enemies of our Religion, and Civil Rights, they ought (especially considering our present Circumstances) to be so far from being persecuted and oppressed, as to have all the Incouragement and Countenance that pious Christians, and Loyal Subjects can claim and deserve. Do not hurt, persecute, or revile any, whom you have reason to believe the Lord Jesus will own, approve and honour. *Will Christ ever thank men at the great day for keeping such out from Communion with his Church, whom he will vouchsafe not only Crowns of Glory to, but it may be Aureola too, if there be any such thing there.*

Dr. Stillingf. Irenic. præf.

It had been well for *Pilate*, if he had harkened to that seasonable message, *Have thou nothing to do with that just man.*

Mat. 27. 19.

2. Take heed of, and avoid the very appearances of this Sin. Keep at as great a distance from it, as possible. Do not cherish in your minds any thing that may ingage or incline to it. Cast away all unjust Prejudices, Mortifie Wrath and Anger, and shut your Ears against them that would incense you against those you differ from, by reporting false and malicious stories of them.

Supposing it could not properly be called Persecution to prosecute and be severe with People about those things which you are satisfied in your own minds, God hath not concern'd himself about, either by Commanding or forbidding them; yet your Ruin-

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ing or making others suffer extreamly for these things, whilst they have other apprehensions either of the Nature or use of them, still unavoidably look too like Persecution (I think) for a serious Compassionate Christian to tolerate himself in. This seems not to have any of that meeknes, Condescention, and Forbearance our Religion doth so expressly and so vehemently inforce.

Nay your, addicting your selves to such Courses, will indanger the indearing of a rough, sowre, and unpeaceable temper to you. And it may be it will at last hurry you into such *Exorbitances*, as you did not at first either Design, or think of: nay, which will amount to inexcusable and down-right Persecution.

This will certainly make way for your entertaining very unjust Prejudices against others. It will lay you liable to greater Transports in your Passions. It will expose you to more and stronger Temptations, than you are at first aware of; it will lay you open to the wiles of Satan, that cunning Adversary, and great destroyer of the Godly.

Nay, it is probable enough, that when those Christian Sentiments and Resolves you do at present retain, are a little worn off, and by disuse become feeble, the very desire and ambition of acquaintance with men of Power and Repute, who are Enemies to Protestants as such, may ingage you in those Practices, which both your deceitful Hearts, and the better hopes of others, made you believe you should for ever detest.

Satan very seldom Attempts to draw any man to direct Persecution at first; He only leads them at first to the out-skirts, and Fleshes them by degrees. But when he has once brought men to take pleasure in seeing others suffer, tho not for real Religion, the sweetness of Blood, or the satisfaction of getting Wealth, or the Honour of being caressed by great men, will indanger to qualifie them to undertake with unconcernedness and Triumph the most barbarous and inhumane Persecutions imaginable.

Men know not where they shall stop, if once they give way to Satan, or their own corrupt Inclinations, in matters of this Nature. People do sometimes act those things under the Alteration of their outward Estate and Condition, and become so extreamely Savage and cruel, as they could not before imagine,

 which

which they could not endure to think of without the highest Concernment and Indignation, 2 *Kings*. 8. 12, 13.

But notwithstanding all this, you may express your Love to, and Zeal for the Church, its Service, and its Ceremonies, sufficiently other ways. I dissuade not from any Methods which do any way tend to the Honour of our Church, or the making of real Proselytes: but only from those which indanger its Reputation, and are not at all suitable to the Matter and Occasion of our Differences. I would perswade you to be as faithful as possible to the Church and its Interests, but not to express your Zeal in so confused and preposterous a way, as will be destructive to humane Society, or indanger your washing your Hands in the Blood of Innocents: Use all the Scripture, and rational Arguments you can to Win upon, and overcome, and Convince them that Dissent; but beware of Extremity and Violence.

How Ridiculous and Absurd is it, to hear Men Talk very Gravely at some times, that the Church hath no Weapons but Tears and Prayers, and yet presently to see the same Men using Rods, and Swords, and Axes in the Churches Behalf? When the Church is in danger of being Clouded, Eclipsed, and Overcome and Suppreſt by Popery, then it is unlawful to endeavour to help our selves, we must only lie prostrate, and try if we can wash away our *Sorrow* with our *Tears*, or, at most, content our selves with *Lord help us*. But when we consider them we have got an Ascendency over, it becomes Glorious (and indeed is more than Christian) to Swagger and Triumph, and tread upon Men of the same Religion with our selves, only because they differ from us in some unhappy Circumstances.

When the Church doth stand upon its proper Basis, and shines
Is. 65. 25. in its Native Beauty and Lustre, there will be no *hurting in God's Holy Mountain*.

That Method which hath most of Lenity, Forbearance, Love, and Meekness, doth best comport with the Nature and Design of Christianity, and most answers that Temper our Saviour and his Apostles commended to the World, both by their Practices and Precepts, *Luke* 9. 55. 2 *Tim*. 2. 24.

3*ly*. Let me say a few Words to you that are Persecutors, you that are Vilifying and Reproaching, Fining, and Destraining on,

Murdering

Murdering and tearing in Pieces the Members of Jesus Christ, if you have any Shadow of Humanity yet remaining, be perswaded to reflect on what you do, consider what your Condition is. If you are not *become Cruel like the Ostriches in the Wilderness*: If *your Consciences be not seared with a hot Iron*: If you do not believe that your Impieties are a sure and impregnable Safeguard and Defence against all the Thunder-Bolts of Gods Vengeance, if you think they do not make you as Impenetrable by the Arrows of the Almighty, as the Scales of the *Leviathan* render him by the Arrows which are commonly cast at him; then deliberate a while, and think seriously, whether one time or other you shall not be ashamed of, and sorry for what you now perpetrate? If you Believe there is any Truth, or any Honesty, or any things that are Pure, or Just, or Lovely, or of good Report, or if there be any Virtue, then consider how contrary to, and inconsistent with all these, Persecution is.

Lam. 4. 3.
1 Tim. 4. 2.
2.

Persecution is a sin that destroys common Humanity: It makes you much more fit to be banish'd from all Reasonable Society, to abide in the Wilderness and Desart, with the Ravenous Devouring Monsters you resemble, than to be permitted to Prey on those who are as Humble as the Child, as Meek and Innocent as the Dove.

You that are Informers and Persecutors, be ye who you will, of what Name, Size, Quality soever, you are of the worst Extraction of all other Creatures. *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Lusts of your Father ye will do; He was a Murderer from the Beginning, and abode not in the Truth, because there is no Truth in him.* And if you Believe not this, you may read the Reason of your Unbelief in the Next Verse; *Because I tell you the Truth, ye believe me not.*

John 8. 44
7

You are at present the Reproach of Human Race. Judgments and Curses of the greatest Size await you here, and are ready to be poured out upon you, to make you Instances of astonishing Vengeance, an Abhorrence to all the World, and an Insupportable Burthen unto your selves. Nor is this your whole Portion, for more than ordinary VVrath, those Torments, and Horrors, which have peculiar, and most envenomed Mixtures in them, are prepared and kept in Store, to make your Eternity

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more amazing and dreadful, than that which will for ever be the Punishment of other Sinners.

If *Depart from me ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, be the mildest Sentence which shall be pronounced on them, who have only with-held their Charity, and not administred to the Necessities of Christs Members; what a terrible Damnation must you expect, who have both hardened your selves against all their Tears and complaints, their Groans and Entreaties, and added Affliction to their affliction? What will be your Doom when Christ *shall come to be Glorified in his Saints*, and shall charge you in particular with pulling the Food out of the Mouths, and Cloaths from the Backs of his dearest Children, yea with eating their very Flesh, and drinking their Blood? With taking from them their Means for Subsistance, rifling their Houses, devouring their Goods, wasting their Estates, and haling them to Goals and Prisons?

You that persecute the Righteous, that you may maintain your Lusts, and gratifie your Luxurious Appetites and Desires with their Wealth and Estates, there is a dreadful Hand of Vengeance ready to appear against you. For all your Huffing and Hectoring, your Swearing and Damning, your Carouzing and Quaffing, your Healthing and Whoring, for all your seeming Jollity and Mirth, your Countenances will change, Paleness shall seize your Faces, Astonishment and Fears your Minds: You are at Present but acting afresh *Belshazzar*'s Folly and Wickedness: You are drinking the Blood of Innocents instead of Wine, you are feasting your selves with the *Substance of the Righteous*. The Vessels you use are purchased with the Lives and Estates of the Just and Upright. *For these things God will not Refrain*, but will *certainly be Avenged of such Wickedness*. When the Divine Hand doth write your Doom (as certainly it will) then will your *Countenance be changed, and your Thoughts troubled, the Joints of your Loins will be loosed, and your Knees will smite one against another*. Your making your selves Drunk with Wine, and your being compassed about with great Men and Nobles, with your Wives and Concubines, will not preserve you from these Effects.

Dan. 5.

Jerem. 5.

Dan. 5. 6.

What will you say for your own Vindication, when the Lord Jesus shall appear in all his Glory, and particularly Charge you with

with Hurting, Defaming, Impoverishing, Starving, Fining, and Murthering this and that Friend, Servant, or Childe of his? For all your confident Domineering at present, tho you look and talk now, as if you would Frown, and Threaten, and Swear them, and all that are Advocates for them, into Goals, nay into their Graves, and, were it possible, lower than that; a Time is hastning when shame and Confusion will cover your Faces, and an Ignominious Silence shall betray your Guilt. A Day is now approaching when you will think it a kind of Happiness, if you might shink privately into the Places of Eternal Torment, and so escape the solemn Reprimand and Condemnation you must have for this Sin in particular, before all the World.

I know there are several things you insist on, to justifie your selves in what you do. But alas! they are such poor, and thin, and slight Excuses, they will be so far from yielding you any Relief in the Judgment-day, that had you any Shame, or Grace, and Modesty, you would blush to name them at present. And that you may not any longer cheat your selves with a vain pretence, that you have enough to justifie you in what you do; I will briefly name what you Principally trust to, and then shew you how foolish and impertinent such Excuses be.

There are three things generally Insisted on by Informers and Persecutors, for their own Vindication: They are these. 1. They say they do no more than what the Law doth Countenance them in. 2. The Persons they prosecute are Dangerous, Seditious, Rebellious People. 3. What they do, is out of Love to, and Zeal for the Church.

These things are commonly alledged, and People do depend on them as Sufficient and Unanswerable. But how unjust these Pretences be, when pleaded by forreign Persecutors of the Protestants, I hope all are satisfied who do heartily approve the Reformation. Now the Prosecution of Dissenting Protestants amongst our selves, is generally defended by the same Arguments. And tho I acknowledge there is a great Difference in the things, on the account of which the Protestants are prosecuted here and in other places, yet all those Abatements being allowed for, the generality of our Fierce and Furious Prosecutors cannot be excused from Guilt by these Instances. This will appear more clearly, if

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If. we consider the Particulars pleaded distinctly, and by themselves.

First, You say you do no more than the Law alloweth. To this I answer in these following Particulars.

1. *Vid.* Dr. *Burnet's* Pref. to his Hist. of the Rights of Princ. *&c.*

1. You do generally understand the Law as little as any other People: And oftentimes when the Law is on a Mans side, as to the matter of what he does, it is against him in the Method he observes. This is undeniably Evident in the Persecution of the Protestants in *France.*

2.

2. Those who have had as good Opportunities as any others to find out the Intention and Meaning of the Laws, do put another Interpretation on them than you do. And therefore you had need to have strong assurance you are in the right, before you adventure on those Courses you cannot justifie, but by such a Pretence as in general is a very blind and imperfect Excuse. For Instance, if the Law condemns seditious Preaching, and you will Prosecute and undo a Man only for Preaching, and not prove any thing of Sedition, you are certainly so far from having the Law to justifie you, that this general Plea will not Excuse you to a Conscience that is in any measure sensible of ordinary Obligations.

3. *Vid.* Ref. of House of Comm. *Jan.* 10. 80. which seems very consonant with our Sovereigns Judgm. when at *Breda.*

3. The Prosecution of these Laws hath been declared Inconvenient and Hurtful to the Protestant Religion, by them who understand the Nature, the Tendency, and the Obligation of these Laws, as well or better than any of the Violent and Outragious Prosecutors of them. And tho this cannot Repeal or make Null the Laws, yet the Opinion of so great, Honourable, and August an Assembly, should have so much Influence, as to check the inordinate Zeal some are too apt to lay out in their unnecessary Informations and Presentments.

4.

4. If you must needs express your Zeal for established Laws, there are others which you may understand more easily, and the Transgressing of which will be more obvious to you, and in the pursuance of which, you may do the Church and the Kingdom good Service, *viz.* Those Laws which are made against Swearing, Drunkenness, Prophaning the Lords Day, *&c.* Have not those Laws, which are inforc'd by God as well as Men, as great a Power and authority over you as those which are only Humane Sanctions? Your talking of the Law is of no weight, whilst

you

you your selves do resolutely Transgress every Day those Laws which are of greater and more general Use.

2ly. But you say in the second Place, that those you Prosecute are Dangerous, Seditious, and Rebellious People.

If you can prove this Charge against them, in Gods Name go on, and never spare them. But is it not very Unjust to say they are Rebellious, and not prove any thing of this Nature against them? Why do you not inform against them under this Notion, and then prove it substantially against them? But to talk thus, and when all comes to be inquired into, it is nothing but for serving God, when, it may be, you were serving the Devil and your Lusts in a Tavern or Brothel House, is the most villanous Wickedness imaginable. *Answ.*

Is not this to write after the most extravagant Instance we have in the French Persecutors? Nay, is it not to out-do what is reported of the Intendant of *Rochefort*, who suppressed a Protestant Minister, when the Deponent could say no more, but that *tho there was nothing to be found fault with in his words, yet he perceived his thoughts were not Innocent*? Present State of Protest. in *France*, p. 21.

Besides many of those you Prosecute, have given great Demonstrations of their Loyalty, having suffered more in the late Times of Usurpation, for the King, than many, if not all of you have, and contributed much more to the bringing of him back to his Crown, and other justs rights. Those who never did more for the King, than make themselves Drunk with drinking his Health, are not fit to compare in Point of Loyalty with them that lost their Estates, and hazarded their Lives for him. And *many of the most considerable Dissenters, did even then, when it was not so safe to do it, as it is now, openly declare against it* (*i. e.* the Murder of the late King) *both in their Sermons and Writings. This is what in Justice cannot be denyed them, and many of them were no less Active and Industrious, and were indeed highly Instrumental in the bringing home of his Majesty that now Reigns.* Dr. Burnet's Fast Serm. on 30 of *Jan.* 1681. p. 16.

3ly. You pretend that all you do is out of Love to, and Zeal for the Church. To which I offer these following Considerations, which may discover how false this pretence is. 3ly.

1. You are not qualified to do the Church any Service. The Church suffers more by the Ungodliness and Debauchedness of 1.

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your Lives, than by any one thing whatsoever. All the Dissenters in the Nation cannot prejudice the Church halfe so much, as you drunken, swearing, Prophane Informers and Persecutors do.

Indeed the Church would be much better without you, than with you; and could she proceed against you in some of those ways you would have her use against others, she would do herself great Right, and very much commend that Purity, and Holiness and strictness, which would greatly adorn her, and which is by your means very much Obscured.

Can any thing reflect more upon a Church, than to have those Men countenanced in prosecuting others, who do themselves discover no real Love to God or Religion, and of whom no good can be said by others, nay, who have nothing to say in their own Vindication, but that when they are in the height of their Debauches, when they are Drunk and Prophane enough to be the Reproach and abhorrence of all Society, they do then pretend to admire and applaud the Church, and do decry, and rail at, and swear against Dissenters.

You do the Church, an unspeakable Injury, you prejudice her almost beyond Repair, by pretending either Love for, or Alliance unto her. For by this means you do what you are able to Represent her to strangers as the only Receptacle of, and Sanctuary for the most infamous Criminals and Villains. It is no Credit to any Woman, be she never so Chaste, Sober, and Honest, that the greatest Debauches, and lewdest Miscreants are incouraged for her Service, and claim her Patronage.

And that which renders you still more unfit for this Service you intrude your selves into, is, that you would make the Church consist only of such as your selves, and dare impudently decry all the Sober, Moderate, and Pious Conformists, with the same Virulence you set your selves against them you call Nonconformists. So that were it in your Power, you would turn the Church into a meer Stew, or Ale-house, or School of Sin and Debauchery.

Dr. Fowler's Assize Serm. 1681. P. 29.

There are, God knows, too too many Debauchees in the Nation, who would be thought great Champions for the King and the Church, but do infinite prejudice to both, by the mad and frantick Expressions of their Zeal; who do mighty honour to Fanaticism, by charging all with it that run not with them to the same Excess of Riot.

As to all those who pretend to be of our Communion, and yet live scandalous Lives, and think that their owning themselves for the Sons of the Church, will Make Attonement for their Immoralities, it is to be fear'd they have done us more hurt, than ever they will do us good. And unless they would reform, it may perhaps be wished that we were rid of them. Let them declare themselves Fanaticks, Papists, any thing, rather than Members of the Church of England. It would perhaps be more desirable to live in a mean, low afflicted Condition without such Company, than to govern the World with it. Dr. Sharp's Serm. before the House of Commons April. 11. 1679.

2. This is an old Hypocritical pretence, with which the Enemies of God and Religion have usually cover'd their wicked Persecutions and barbarous Cruelties. This cannot secure you from Vengeance. God incourages his people to hope that he would appear for them, and against such as should make this pretence for their Persecuting them. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word: your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my Names sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified; but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.* They pretended what they did against them that trembled at the Word of the Lord, was for the Church, and that God might be Glorified; but yet God would bring them to shame for their Hypocrisie. 2. Is. 66. 5.

I am afraid there are many who talk high for the Church, who would be glad to see her welter in her own Blood, or consumed to Ashes with those flames they hope to kindle by their own furious or intemperate Zeal. People who are wicked enough, notwithstanding their loud Crys for the Church, to set her on Fire themselves, and then, like *Nero*, Triumph, and Dance, and Sing, when they behold her devouring Flames and utter Devastation.

As some in the late Times did very wickedly face Rebellion with the name of Religion, so it is to be feared some in these days do Cloke Popery, Revenge, and hatred to all Piety, with the name of the Church. *All that swear by the Name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, do not do it in Truth nor in Righteousness.* Isa. 48. 1.

3. Your not Prosecuting them who play and drink, or walk & loiter away the Lords day and other times they should allot for the publick service & worship of God, does plainly demonstrate it 3.

is not any hearty Concernment for Religion, or the honour of the Church of *England*, which engages you in these Methods, but rather an invincible Detestation to Holiness and Truth, as such. Could you with the Like Impunity shut up our Church doors, and revile our Liturgy, and cast contempt on our Bishops, and all the other serious and hearty Officers of our Church, who oppose and contradict you in your Lusts and Wickedness, it is not much to be doubted, but you would be as severe and Tyrannous this way, as you be the other.

If you have such Love to the Church, why are you so mild, and favourable, and gentle towards the Papists, who are as great Enemies to the State as to the Church? Why are yon not for getting those Laws executed which are in force against Field and Street-walkers, and those that haunt Ale-houses and Taverns, and who are playing at Cards or Dice, when they should be at Church? And those who are rattling about in their Coaches, or other ways conveying themselves from one place to another on the Lord's day, and in time of Divine Service, to perform some Idle and Sacrilegious Visits?

4. The Methods you use are no way becoming the Church, they will never do the Church any Service. Force and Violence will never satisfie Mens Judgments; They will not extirpate those unjust Prejudices People have sucks in against our Church, but will rather confirm them. These Courses will not fairly remove Men Scruples.

Suppose you should force many to come within the Door of our Churches, by harsh and servere proceedings, what is our Church the better for this? Can you, together with outward Compulsion, infuse into their Minds an affectionate Love to, and unfeigned Approbation of our Service and Worship? If not, you may make our Church fuller of Hypocrites than she was before, but not fuller of Real and Cordial Proselites? You may turn the places for our publick Worship into Prisons, if you please; but you cannot by these means make the Dissenters *a willing People in the day of your Power*.

The Members of the Church must be Voluntiers, and not Press'd men. Such as are forced, will never do acceptable Service: They will embrace the first Opportunity to relinquish and bespatter us.

It has hitherto been the certain Property and Character of Heterodox, Heretical, Popish, and Anti-Christian Churches and People, to Persecute and oppress others, or to use violent, fierce, and ruining Courses to advance themselves and their Interests. And it was the way of the pure Christian Church, anciently, and since the Reformation, to use no methods with their Enemies, but what were full of Reason, Scripture, Meekness, and Christian Forbearance.

The learned Bishop of St. *Asaph* does determine the Question, Who are the Church of God? Or who are the Enemies of it? By bringing it to this issue; *That they who are most given to hate and destroy others, especially those who differ from them in Religion, they are not the Church of God, or at least they are so far Corrupt in that Particular.* Serm. before the House of Lords, Novemb. 5th. 1680 p. 8.

These Courses do not agree and suit with the Temper and Constitution of our Church, and therefore I am afraid they who use these Methods, or countenance and incourage them who appear boisterous in them, are either ignorant of, and strangers to our Constitution, or implacable Enemies to our Church. Instead of doing the Church any Service, they seem to study to do her all the mischief they can, under a contrary pretence. *It is is not the Genius of our Church she hath no Doctrine that teacheth Persecution, she hath not practised it, as others, when they were in Authority. I thank God for it, and I hope she will alway continue in that Temper, which being added to the other Marks of a true Christian Church, may assure us that she is a Church according to the mind of Christ.* Id p. 62.

It was one thing that did not a little commend the Protestant Religion to the world, that after it's Establishment in these Nations, tho Popery gained Power again in these Kingdoms, and influenced it's Professors to treat the Protestants with all the Cruelty and outrage that Religion doth inspire men with, or direct them to, yet when in Queen *Elizabeths* Reign Popery was cashier'd, and the Protestants had the Power and Laws on their side, they used no Violence, Fury, or Revenge at all; *The living in the midst of them, whose dearest Friends and Relations they had Murdered, and tho Protestants could say, There goes he that burnt my Father, or he that Murder'd my Brother, or that brought them to that cruel Death, tho the Queen her self could say who they were that in her Sisters time dealt* Id p. 28.

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most insolently and barbarously with her, yet when she came to be their Queen, for ten years she touched not a Hair of any of their Heads.

Notwithstanding *Bonner* had in the preceding Reign been a most bloody and barbarous Persecutor of the Protestants, and had often in his Persecution of them exceeded what the Law allowed, yet this was not revenged upon him: no, so far were the Reformers from doing any thing that might look like Revenge, that he was suffered to go about in safety, and was not made a Sacrifice to the Revenge of those who had lost their next Friends by his means.

Dr. Burnets Hist. Refor. part 2d. p 396.

It was Peace, and Love, and Mercy, and Condescension, and Meekness, which brought Repute to this Church formerly, and adorn'd it in it's most flourishing state: And why should you now change it's ancient Methods, if your Love to it be the same, and your Zeal as Regular as was that of our first and best Reformers?

Fourthly. 4. In the fourth place, this discovers what ill Offices they do (whether they be of the Clergy, or in other places of pow't) who are continually exciting people to inform against all Dissenters, without making any difference. Peoples spirits are apparently over-heated already, they are cast into too Violent a ferment; And therefore rather than use any means to exasperate their Passions more, we ought all in our places to do what we can, to cool these heats, and reduce men to more calm and gentle tempers. Especially should this be the care and study of them who pretend they have a right to that Character, of being Ambassadours and Heraulds of Peace. Your loud Declamations, your passionate and envenom'd Instigations, and your sounding Alarms from the Pulpit against Dissenters in general, will not please, nor gratifie, nor benefit any, but the sensual, debauch't part of your Auditors. This will endanger the creating ill apprehensions of the way you pretend to, in the minds of the Soberer and more harmless sort. Such kind of Preaching will be Interpreted but like clapping your Hands, and looing on the Dogs, which instead of bringing People into the Church, will be apt to drive them out of the Church-Yard. St. *Paul* directs us to a more Christian Method, and such an one as will, if generally, faithfully, and diligently observed (and we are qua-

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lified to make use of it) make thousands of more real Proselytes to our Church, than common Informations, Fines, and other Punishments will make, 2 Tim. 2. 24, 25.

5ly. This calls for your Prayers for, and your Commiseration, and Pity, and what other help and assistance you are able to Administer, to them that are Persecuted. 5ly.

You have this day heard that your Neighbour-Protestants are in a very Afflicted and Calamitous Estate. This calls for your Pity, your Prayers, your Help, and what relief you can afford them.

You know not how soon your own Condition may be the same with theirs, if you will resolutely adhere to your Religion, and dare not deny Christ and his Gospel; you are at present safe, you enjoy the Prostestant Religion peaceably, but you have no assurance this prosperous and shining Day will continue long.

Now, if you would find help and relief from others, when destitute, afflicted, and persecuted, have some regard to, and let your Bowels yern over your persecuted Neighbours, *in this their day of affliction*. Nature, Religion, Christianity, all that is good and excellent, intreat and importune your Charity. Can you deny these sufferers? Can you withold any thing from Christ, imploring and beseeching your Commiseration in these his afflicted, persecuted Members? Can you eat and drink, and feast your selves, and be merry, and have no concern for Christ's wandring, naked, indigent, distressed Servants and Followers? Ye that *put far away the Evil day, and cause the seat of Violence to come near, that lye upon Beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their Couches, and eat the Lambs out of the flocks, and the Calves out of the midst of the stall, that chant to the sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves Instruments of Musick like* David, *that drink Wine in Bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief Oyntments, but they are not grieved for the affliction of* Joseph. *Therefore now shall they go Captive, with the first that go Captive, and the Banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.* Amos 6 3. to the 8. v.

But that you may be more duly affected with their Condition, I will lay before you the same Account which is given of it by the most Impartial, Learned, and Celebrated Historian of this Age. The Account is this. D. Burnets Pref. to his Hist. of the Rights of Princes in the disposing of Ecclesiastical Benefices, &c. p. 54, &c.

Those born in the Communion of the Church of Rome *are requir'd not to change their Religion, which was left free before. Schools and Colledges are suppressed in most places. The Churches which the Protestants had in the Country-*

Country or small Towns, are generally razed, and all Religious meetings in private houses are forbidden. The Synods and Coliquies of their Clergy are forbidden, except a Popish Commissioner is present, the singing of Psalms is prohibited: When they are sick, they are forced to admit the Popish Magistrates to come with Witnesses to exhort them to change their Religion. No Midwives are permitted to Practise but Papists, that so they may Baptize their Children, upon which it may be afterwards pretended, if they continue Protestants, that they are relapsed, because they were baptized by a Papist; and the Punishment of this is Terrible. No Minister, Elder or Deacon may go and visit their Flocks, to confirm them in their Religion, when they are wavering in it; Accusations are brought upon the slightest Pretences against the Ministers or others which are noted for their Zeal in the cause of Religion, upon which Orders for their imprisonment are easily given out, & they are either forced to fly, or are ruin'd by a long imprisonment. And the Intendants of the Provinces oppress them most unmercifully, with design as may be easily guessed, to drive them into a Rebellion, that so a pretence may be given to destroy them all at once. No Protestants can be admitted to any Charge or Employment, how mean soever it be. Nor may they be received to any Trading or Mechanical Corporation. And to take from them all confidence or credit in Trade, if any Protestant Merchant turn Papist, he cannot be sued for his Accounts, or Debts, for three years thereafter. And these Orders are much heavier in the manner in which they are executed.

Vid. Present State of the Protestants in *France*, *and*, The policy of the Clergy of *France*. to destroy the Protestants of that Kingdom.

Id. p. 59. *The present proceedings in* Poictou, *shew what the rest are too look for, the Mercenary Agents of Mr.* Pelisson *prevailed so far on the Weaknesses and Necessities of many, as to draw them to abjure their Religion, but not a few of these soon after repenting of that base Bargain, by which for a few Crowns, they had sold their Souls, and openly expressing their Horrour for it, were clapt in Prison, where they lye still in great misery, only their Numbers are such, that it seems it is not thought fit to proceed to Extremities against so many at once.*

Id. p. 62. *But the Intendant of that Province, Mr.* de Marilliac, *whether directed by secret Orders, or set on by the fierceness of his own Temper, or by his Confessors, is not known, is resolved to take a severe revenge of the rest of that Religion for the sake of those unhappy relapsers, and hat treated them not as Peaceable and Obedient Subjects, but often as Rebels and declared Enemies. Their Goods and their Houses are robbed, & their Persons violently assaulted, and all that is done by the Intendant's Order. The Soldiers under his Command are lodged only in the houses of those of the Religion, where they do not only ruine their Hosts, by the excessive Charge they put them to, and by*

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the Contributions they exact from them, but use all the means they can think of to frighten them out of their Religion; tho the horrid Oaths, and Blasphemies they break out daily in, are but ill Arguments to persuade Men to turn. If they refuse to go to Mass, they cudgel them, they drag the Women by the Hair of the Head, with Ropes about their Necks, they Torture some with their Screws, they bind Men of Eighty years of Age, and abuse their Children before their Eyes: and such of the Souldiers as are not Guilty of those Cruelties, yet spoil and rob their Goods, and sell them publickly, they threaten them often with Death, if they will not change, having naked Swords in their Hands, or holding Pistols to their Breasts! And if all these means are inefectual, then they carry them in Sheets to Churches, and fling Holy Water on them, and tell them now they are made Catholicks and if they return again to their heresie, they threaten them, they will accuse them as Relapsers And when House-keepers are by these means quite Ruined, yet they must not give up their Houses, tho they can keep them no longer, but are Fined 500 Livers if they quit them; and what has always been the Privilege of the Miserable, is now denied them; for when they come to complain of these Violences to the Intendant, He, without hearing them, or observing the common Forms of Justice, sends them presently to Prison, and keeps them still there, without framing any Process against them; and not content with all this, tho it is scarce to be imagined what can come after it or rise beyond it, when he heard that Complaints were made of these Outrages to the King, he sent upon that his Officers to many of their Houses, to force them to sign a Denial of the Truth of these Violences, which they had suffered.

And that which aggravates their Misery, and therefore renders them more deserving of our Commiseration and Help, is, that they are a People who have done extroardinary Services for the Crown, and could never yet be charged with any undutiful Demeanour to the Government. And they have the same Rights and Priviledges with the other Subjects, assured to them by as firm Edicts, and binding Laws, as any by which that Nation is govern'd: and yet purely on the account of their Religion, without the Guilt or Charge of any Fault, and in direct Contradiction to those Laws which were made and often Confirmed for their Security, are they now Persecuted to the Degree before-mentioned.

This shews, that neither the best Services, the greatest Innocence, the highest Merits, nor the most sacred and Solemn Tyes, Engagements, or Laws, can secure a Protestant People from being treated as the

the vilest Criminals and Rebels, when under the Power, Influence and Authority of a Popish Bigotted Prince.

Sixthly. *Sixthly*, which in the last place calls us all to prepare our selves for Persecution. What clouds do hang over us? What storms do threaten us! We are none of us Ignorant of the Attempts which have been made, and are still carrying on, to Supplant and Overthrow the Protestant Religion, and to bring in Popery amongst us, as an overflowing Stream.

And that which greatly threatens our loss of the Gospel and those Ordinances we have long enjoyed, is both the great and general Increase of Wickedness and Debauchery amongst us, and that too many of those who have pretended to desire and endeavour our Security and Reformation, have set up for Atheism, or at least have declared themselves Enemies to the Scripture, the Deity of Christ, the publick Ministry, and all Ordinances. And it is not much different whether we have our Bible, our Services, and publick Administrations, in *Latin*, or whether we have none at all. These things do witness against us, and unless we do throughout the Nation set upon a serious and vigorous Reformation, we may expect our *Candlestick will be removed*; and that we shall either be stript of all our present enjoyments or at most but inherit the Name of them. And if such days do come, then all *who will Live Godly, must certainly suffer Persecution.*

Not do I at all doubt, but if either Popery, or Atheism, or both, have in these Nations the Countenance and Encouragement of a Prince, the very same Men who are now Violent against Protestants, and Pious People, will then with greater Fury Persecute, Oppress and destroy all that will either own and Worship God, or approve themselves avowed Protestants.

Let us therefore study the Scripture diligently, be thoroughly Informed in the Christian Faith, get our Hearts raised to an unconquerable Admiration and Love of the Blessed Jesus. Let us take heed of placing too much Confidence on a Natural Resolution, or Humane Strength. Let us learn to resign up our selves entirely unto Christ; and pray daily that we may not fear any of those things which we shall suffer, but that we may be so strengthned and assisted by the Spirit of Grace, that we may approve our selves faithful unto Death. Thus we may attain to Inherit a Crown of Glory, which God in his Infinit Mercy bring every one of us unto, for the Merits Sake of Jesus Christ, our Blessed and only Saviour and Redeemer, to whom with the Father, *&c.*

FINIS.